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For Immediate Release

Hantavirus Death Confirmed in Coconino County

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – Coconino County Public Health Services District (CCPHSD) officials confirmed today that a Coconino County resident died recently from complications of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), a rare but potentially fatal disease spread by infected rodent droppings.

It is unknown where the individual, who lived in the east central part of the County, contracted the virus; however studies in Arizona have shown that hantavirus infections can occur in wild mice throughout the state, and human cases of HPS have occurred in both northern and southern counties.

HPS is transmitted to people that come into contact with or breathe infected urine, droppings and/or saliva of wild mice, primarily deer mice. Anyone who comes into contact with rodents that carry Hantavirus is at risk of HPS. The illness is not spread from person to person.

“Exposure to mouse droppings in enclosed areas is the primary risk of infection. It is extremely important to take appropriate precautions when entering and cleaning sheds, garages, campers, cabins, barns and other buildings,” said Marie Peoples, CCPHSD Chief Health Officer.

The illness starts with fever, headache and muscle aches, and progresses rapidly to severe difficulty in breathing and, in some cases, death.

Including this case, there have been 4 confirmed cases of hantavirus reported in Coconino County since January 2006, resulting in two deaths from complications from the illness. During this time there have been 37 probable or confirmed hantavirus cases in Arizona, 16 of which have resulted in death.

To prevent HPS, public health officials recommend the following:
Proper clean-up methods for areas that may have rodent activity:

- Open all door and windows, leave them open for 30 minutes before cleaning.
- Do not stir up dust by vacuuming, sweeping, or any other means.



- When rodent droppings or nests are found in and around the home, spray them liberally with a household disinfectant and allow them to soak for at least 15 minutes. Any rodent droppings and rodent nests should be sprayed with a pesticide to kill fleas before disinfecting or disposing the carcasses.
- After disinfecting, wear rubber gloves and clean up the droppings with disposable materials such as paper towels, rags or disposable mop heads.
- Seal all materials, droppings or nests in double plastic bags and dispose of them in the trash.

Rodent-proof your home:

- Prevent rodents from entering the home by plugging or sealing all holes and gaps to the outside greater than 1/4-inch in diameter. Use steel wool, thick wire screen, metal flashing or cement to seal holes.
- Eliminate or reduce rodent shelter around the home by removing outdoor junk and clutter, and by moving woodpiles, lumber, hay bales etc., as far away from the house as possible.
- Do not make food easily available to rodents. Do not leave pet food in dishes. Dispose of garbage in trash cans with tight-fitting lids.

For more information regarding HPS, call the Coconino County Public Health Services District at 928-679-7272, toll-free at 877-679-7272 or visit www.coconino.az.gov/health or www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/hps.

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